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PHL 110E.50: Introduction to Ethics

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Philosophy 110E Ethics Syllabus

This syllabus is a resource for information regarding class policies and deadlines. We expect you to consult this syllabus if you have a question about the class policies. If you have a question about class policies that isn't addressed in the syllabus, then please feel free to reach out.

We will be communicating with you via your UM email account, especially for any unexpected changes that may come up with schedule, reading materials, etc. If you find the UM email interface unappealing, we suggest you forward that email to an account that you prefer. We will expect that you check your email daily.

Office Hours and Contact Information

- Instructor: Armond Duwell
- Email: armond.duwell@umontana.edu
- Zoom Office hours: By Appointment

Course Summary

This course is an introduction to the major approaches to the study of ethics in the Western tradition. Our objectives are to get a sense of the major approaches to ethics, but most importantly learn how to critically evaluate the quality of moral arguments, even those whose conclusions we might agree with.

Texts

This course will use an open access textbook (free): [Introduction to Philosophy: Ethics](#)

The readings in this class are not that lengthy, that said, you are expected to read everything at least twice!

Grading

15% quizzes, 15% syntheses, 39% midterms, 31% cumulative final.

Quizzes

Each unit has a study guide associated with it. Before you start reading the book and watching the videos, you should familiarize yourself with the study guide. Take notes on the study guide as you read and watch videos. These study guides will tell you what you need to know or be able to do for the quizzes. Each unit has a quiz associated with it. You get two attempts on the quizzes. I will average the grades from the two attempts. So, it pays to put in the effort to do as well as possible on your first homework attempt. NOTE: there is a one hour delay between the possible quiz attempts. Plan accordingly. Quizzes make up 15% of your final grade.

Quizzes are due every Sunday by 11:59pm.

Synthesis

You will be writing three syntheses for the course. Syntheses are meant to help you understand the material. Understanding is generally defined as the ability to summarize, infer from, generalize, and/or transfer your knowledge of the material. Syntheses are also opportunities to develop your writing skills. Syntheses make up 15% of your final grade.

In a synthesis, you are expected to write a short essay composed of three paragraphs. Your synthesis must be on a claim from one of the following units. If you submit a synthesis on a topic from an unapproved unit, you will receive a failing grade. Please refer to the video for more detailed instructions.

Synthesis 1

- Cultural Relativism
- Morality and Religion

Synthesis 2

- Animal Ethics
- Utilitarianism (1 OR 2)
- Kantian Ethics

Synthesis 3

- Virtue Ethics
- Care Ethics
- Social Contract Theory

When writing your synthesis, please use the following format:

1. Paragraph 1: Identify and describe one claim and the arguments behind that claim from one unit on the approved list. Minimum of 150 words.
2. Paragraph 2: Discuss the strengths and weaknesses of the claim drawing from course material. Minimum of 200 words.
3. Paragraph 3: Discuss how the claim has impacted your worldview. Minimum 150 words.

A range:

The synthesis contains all the required components of the synthesis. It contains an accurate reconstruction of claim and an accurate and charitable reconstruction of the arguments supporting the claim. It contains the strengths and weaknesses of these arguments. The student demonstrates their capacity to make insightful comments on how the claim impacted their worldview. The synthesis is very well written (in proper english, proofread, clear).

B range:

The synthesis contains most, missing no more than one, of the required components of the synthesis. It contains a reasonably accurate reconstruction of the views, as well as a charitable reconstruction of the arguments supporting these views. It includes a reasonably accurate analysis of the strengths and weaknesses of these arguments. The student demonstrates their capacity to make thoughtful comments on how the claim impacted worldview. The synthesis is well written.

C range:

The synthesis is missing one to two required components. It presents the views and supporting arguments, their weaknesses and strengths, but does so either not accurately, or in an incomplete manner. The student makes some comments on how the claim impacted worldview. The paper is acceptably well written.

D range:

The synthesis lacks a significant amount of the required components, or the synthesis misconstrues the view in a significant respect, or it provides a poor summary of the views and arguments offered, or it fails to make comments on how the claim impacted worldview, or it is poorly written.

F:

The synthesis does not meet the minimum required content, misconstrues the view in a significant respect, provides a poor summary of the views and arguments offered, fails to make comments on how the claim impacted worldview, and is poorly written, or chose a topic outside the approved list.

Missed synthesis assignments may be excused in cases of illness. Contact us ASAP in this case and please be prepared to provide appropriate documentation. The synthesis deadlines are:

- Synthesis 1 due 10/3 at 11:59 pm (submit via Moodle).
- Synthesis 2 due 10/31 at 11:59 pm (submit via Moodle).
- Synthesis 3 due 12/5 at 11:59 pm (submit via Moodle).

Exams

There will be four exams. All will be administered on Moodle. The first three exams will each be worth 13% of your grade. The first three exams are non-cumulative. They cover the material since the last exam, or in case of the first exam the material since the beginning of class. The questions on these exams will be multiple choice. The final exam is cumulative and will be worth 31%.

There are deadlines for exams in this course. You can always take an exam early, but you do need to complete exams by certain dates. The dates are:

- Exam 1 must be completed by 9/26 at 11:59 pm.
- Exam 2 must be completed by 10/24 at 11:59 pm.
- Exam 3 must be completed by 11/14 at 11:59 pm.
- Final must be completed by 12/17 at 11:59pm.

Make up exams will be given only in extreme circumstances, family death, severe illness, severe car accident, etc. Proof of extreme circumstances is required in order to make up an exam. Exams not taken, for any reason, will receive a zero. If you have a problem, contact us as soon as you know you have a problem! Note, you can take exams early!

Academic Misconduct

You are strictly held to the [University of Montana Student Conduct Code](#). The syntheses must be your own work. Plagiarism is unacceptable.

Disability Accommodations

Students with disabilities will receive reasonable modifications in this course related to those disabilities. Your responsibilities are to request them from us with sufficient advance notice, and to be prepared to provide verification of disability and its impact from the Office for Disability Equity. Please speak with us after class or during my office hours to discuss the details. For more information, visit the [Office for Disability Equity](#). Please inform us if you have any accessibility issues. One video, "Dead Man Walking" does not have subtitles. Please let me know if this creates a difficulty for you. We will make arrangements.

Drop Policy

I adhere to the UM policy on dropping courses. You may drop the course for any reason between the start of the course and 11/5 at 5:00pm. If you are nearing the deadline of 11/5, please make a request at least two days in advance of the deadline. Requests to drop the

course after 11/5 are not automatically approved. If you want to drop the course after this day, you have to have some kind of external circumstance that interferes with your ability to continue in the course; having a grade lower than you prefer is not an acceptable reason to drop during this time. Some examples of documented circumstances that may merit approval are: accident or illness, family emergency, or other circumstances beyond the student's control. Instructors and advisors have the right to indicate they do not recommend the drop. However, it is the decision of the Dean of the student's major to approve or deny the request to drop courses.

Schedule

Week 1: 8/30-9/3

- Introduction
- Unit: Knowledge, Willful Ignorance, Opinion, and Free Speech
- Take the quiz

Week 2: 9/8-9/10

- Unit: Arguments
- Take the quiz

Week 3: 9/13-9/17

- Unit: Cultural Relativism
- Take the quiz

Week 4: 9/20-9/24

- Exam 1 must be completed by Sunday 9/26 at 11:59 pm. Covers up through Cultural Relativism.
- Unit: Morality and Religion
- Take the quiz

Week 5: 9/27-10/1

- Unit: Animal Ethics
- Synthesis 1 due 10/3 by 11:59pm.
- Take the quiz

Week 6: 10/4-10/8

- Unit: Utilitarianism 1

- Film: A Death of One's Own
- Take the quiz

Week 7: 10/11-10/15

- Unit: Utilitarianism 2
- Take the quiz

Week 8: 10/18-10/22

- Exam 2 must be completed by Sunday 10/24 at 11:59 pm. Covers Morality and Religion through Utilitarianism II.
- Unit: Kantian Ethics
- Take the quiz

Week 9: 10/25-10/29

- Unit: Punishment
- Film: Dead Man Walking
- Synthesis 2 due 10/31 by 11:59pm.
- Take the quiz

Week 10: 11/1-11/5

- Unit: Virtue Ethics
- Film: The Courage to Care
- Take the quiz

Week 11: 11/8-11/12

- Unit: Care Ethics
- Exam 3 must be completed on Wednesday 11/14 by 11:59 pm. Covers Kant through Virtue Ethics.
- Take the quiz

Week 12: 11/15-11/19

- Unit: Social Contract Theory
- Take the quiz

Week 13: Thanksgiving Break

Week 14: 11/29-12/3

- Unit: Racism
- Film: 13th
- Synthesis 3 due 12/5 by 11:59pm.
- Take the quiz

Week 15: 12/6-12/10

- Unit: Consent
- Take the quiz

Week 16: 12/13-12/17

- The final exam must be completed by 12/17 at 11:59pm.